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"PURIM."

A Series of Character Poems in Four Parts and Tableaux.

BY

RABBI H. M. BIEN.

"PURIM:"

A SERIES OF CHARACTER-POEMS

IN

FOUR PARTS AND TABLEAUX,

CONTAINING THE COMPLETE HISTORY FROM THE BOOK OF ESTHER.

—o—

SECOND REVISED EDITION.

FOR RECITATIONS BY YOUNG PEOPLE,

ESPECIALLY SUNDAY-SCHOOLS AND Y. M. L. A.

BY

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CHARACTERS REPRESENTED:

MALES:

AHASUERUS.....King of Media and Persia.
HAMAN.....His First Minister.
MORDECAI.....A Jew, Gate-Keeper of the Palace.
CARBONI.....The Royal Herald.
HATACH—VASHTI, DISGUISED, IN MALE ATTIRE.....
.....The Royal Scribe.

Two Halberdiers, Haman's Sons, Soldiers, People.

FEMALES:

PROLOGUE.....By a little girl.
VASHTI.....The Queen.
ESTHER.....Mordecai's Ward.
ZERESH.....Haman's Wife.

First Maid of Honor, Second Maid of Honor, Court Ladies, Maids of Honor.

**

DIVISIONS:

PART FIRST.—THE CORONATION OF ESTHER.

PART SECOND.—THE DOOM OF THE JEWS.

PART THIRD.—PRIDE COMES TO GRIEF.

PART FOURTH.—THE INSTITUTING OF PURIM.

**

SCENE.

A pillared, wide-open palace-court of Shusan, in back part of which are thrones for king and queen, magnificently draped.

COSTUMES.

Ancient Persian and Hebrew styles, brilliant and varied as much as possible in color and material. Specially required: king's and queen's royal purple mantles; sackcloth—garment for Mordecai in Part II.

PROPERTIES.

Shepherd's crook for Mordecai. King's and queen's golden crowns. Megillah—a parchment scroll. Golden sceptre for king. Trumpet, with flag-vail, used afterward as sacred cover for Megillah. Sack, apparently filled with ashes. Royal signet-ring.

PROLOGUE.

Little girl, comes out, before the curtain rises.

Ladies, Gentlemen and Fellow-Members:

I'll tell you a secret—but do not betray—
What I now to you shall in confidence say:
My comrades will try to amuse you awhile—
They'll make you believe—I know you will smile—
That they are great actors—just watch well their faces;
Their strutting the stage—their talk and grimaces;
Their hands and their feet—their he-hes and ha-has—
Their jerking of heads and their working of jaws;
And sure you will think, the girls and the boys—
Resemble quite natural some fine wooden toys.
But do not believe, friends, that I hither came
To mock my dear mates and make of them game;
To have your opinion forestalled and forejudged,
Because I have some of their weaknesses nudged.
Now let me no less, while they still at me pout—
To you their strong claims and their merits point out:
First then and foremost your favorites they are,
And therefore each should to you seem like a star.
The love which to angels your darlings exalts,
Will now too forgive them their amateur faults.
'Tis a pity, my dears, that out of the whole,
Not each could have played the principal role.
One had to be first and one had to be last;
In spite of all envy such must be the cast.
If all will endeavor to fill out their part
The smaller the compass, the greater the art!
'Tis the story of "Esther," we will now recite;

The "M'gillah,"* of old; on Purim† at night,
To be read in Hebrew, as has been in vogue,
In orthodox fashioned Synagogue.
We think it a more intelligent way,
That you understand what we have to say.
Therefore you must not think it wrong
That we shall speak in our mother-tongue.
Each one a character of the event
Will faithful endeavor to represent.
Be patient with us—indulgent and kind—
And bear this my humble petition in mind:
Judge our good intentions and not what we do;
I bid you thus welcome! Adieu, friends, adieu!

(*Kisses her hands at audience and exits r. h., after which the curtain rises.*)

*The book of Esther written on a parchment scroll. †The Feast of Esther on the 14th day of the 12th month Adar.

PART FIRST.

THE CORONATION OF ESTHER.

Ahasuerus (*Enters majestically from r. h. Bugle calls as he comes.*)—

Behold! I'm King Ahasuerus! the mighty potentate!
From "Judah" unto "Cush" extends my power, reign and state.
To Shusan—my great capital, have come from far and near
My vassals to a royal feast—they are all gathered here.
From hundred and seventy provinces of North, South, West and East,
I show them my unbounded wealth, in revelry they feast.
And now to make my happiness complete for all my life:
I'll prove to them this mighty king has, too, the fairest wife.
Therefore I'll bid Vashti, the queen, forthwith shall show her face—
Nobility and people may behold her beauteous grace.

[*Exit r. h.*

Haman (*Enters pompously l. h. and advances to front.*)—

Haman is my name—the last "Amalekite!"*
Adviser to the king! In influence and might,
But one degree to him at present, an inferior,
To all his subjects (*aside*) nay in time, too, his superior. (*aloud*)
A confidential message I bear unto his queen,
Who to appear in public she has commanded been.
If I but know her right—this woman, with a will
Of her own, dare resent the outrage, bold and ill,
Against all Eastern customs of female modesty.
There will be serious trouble, I warrant it—you'll see.

[*Exit haughtily l. h.*

*The Talmud traces back the genealogy of Haman to Amalek and Esau.

Vashti (*Enters weeping, r. h.*)—
And this to me? the queen! unprecedented shame!
I will resent the outrage!—or Vashti's not my name!
I, who brought up retired—strict Oriental fashion,
Now be made sacrifice to his unbounded passion,
For hollow pride and power. I? show myself? indeed!
(*stamps her feet*)
I will not go—no never—nor his vile bidding heed!
(*Muses, walking to and fro—more composed*)
These men will always play our masters, and be they low or be they high,
Will rule and lord it over woman, at least they will imperious try.
Weak-minded, pliant and obedient, our sex most always does submit;
Aye! it were different had they only a little more of pride and wit.
For we by nature fair and lovely, the nobler part of human kind,
To men superlatively better, in soul and body, heart and mind;
We bear the burden of existence, serve from the cradle to the grave.
Yet could be free if we would never permit ourselves to be the slave.
I'd willingly become a beggar or instantly would rather die,
To be example to my sisters, while I my lord's command defy.
True! he has given me these baubles, a royal diadem and crown.
Like pretty puppets men adorn us, with gaudy gems and costly gown;
And then degrade us as their creatures. Now let one learn what woman can
If once aroused; that she is stronger than most despotic, selfish man.
I know the time is near approaching when females will their rights assert.
The more advanced will be determined to act harmonious in concert.
They will no longer then permit it, that man shall rule the world alone;
And will no longer be the servants of kitchen, feasting-hall or throne.

We too can traffic. plead and labor, can sculpture, sing and play
and paint;
Strong-minded women will hereafter take Vashti for their patron
saint.
Ahasuerus, he will rage and bluster, that I his bidding disobey!
I scorn his wrath—defy his anger; the consequence be what it
may. [*Exit l. h.*

Haman (*r. h. exultingly.*)—
I knew it all beforehand—the king will foam and rage!
Defiance makes him sore, and like a lion in his cage,
He'll spring upon whatever may come within his reach—
The flame I'll feed however to widen still the breach.
"A fine time" I will say—"we men will have hereafter
"If even monarchs may become the stock for laughter,
"In being thus defied by woman—she his wife;
"And having bold denied—the rights of sovereign life.
"No woman shall thus boast—Queen Vashti thou art lost!"
(*Vashti has been seen listening and gesticulating. Haman exits l. h.*)

Carboni, (*the Herald, comes with trumpet and flag. Enters r. h., gives three bugle calls while entering.*)—
Carboni, I, the Herald, come by the king's behest;
Proclaiming to the nation, to make it manifest:
Queen Vashti's disobedience is punished just but sore (*bugle call*)
That it be known: A husband is master evermore,
In his own family; the wives they must and shall obey—
Whatever are men's wishes or what demand they may! (*bugle call.*)
(*Takes flag from bugle.*)
This is the vail—death-dooming vail—by Haman's stern com-
mand
To be placed on her guilty head, for treason—by my hand.
It is the sign that she who has the king's mandate opposed,
From crown and throne, from royalty, from reign, aye! is deposed.
(*bugle call.*)
And then all maidens of the land, how rich or poor connected,
Are bid, present themselves at court; from them shall be selected

A queen—a royal consort. All cómely ones—appear—
To see which one shall favor find, with him—whom all revere.

[*Bugle calls, exit l. h.*

(*Enter Mordecai, r. h., bowing to Esther, who enters from l. h.*)

Mordecai.—Come forth, my Esther darling, and be thou not afraid!
Trust me, thy guardian, Mordecai, my lovely, cherished maid.
The apple of my eye is not more dear than has been ever
Thine honor, life and happiness; nor shall we part or sever.
'Tis true thou art an Israelite, which none has yet surmised;
The slave and captive in this land—all hated and despised.
Yet come thou fearless forward, into our monarch's sight.
The God of father Abraham, will guard thee and thy right.
Thou art—although I say it—the fairest of the fair—
And love does not for ancestry, nor for religion care!
Yet be thou cautious, darling; by my advice reveal
Nor birth, nor faith! it may be for both our future weal.

Esther.—My benefactor—father! why wilt thou not consent?
Thy Esther was and is not upon ambition bent.
Let me return, I prithee! unto our home so bright,
Where I have known such happiness, with love and life and light.
Where I have learned my prayers; my nation's history;
Where thou wast friend and guardian and teacher unto me!

Mordecai.—My child! come—act thou bravely, and do not mar thy chance.
I have a premonition—for some deliverance
Does Providence decree it—that thou so fair and young,
Shalt be the chosen bride queen—from out this envious throng.
Here take my blessing, darling, before we now must part—
And Heaven sure will hear it from out a father's heart.
The Jews' parental blessing, through which once comes Messiah;
God make thee like our sainted mothers, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Liah!*

[*Both exeunt l. h.*

Vashti. (*Disguised in male attire, as Hatach the Scribe.*)—
Thanks to this autocratic Haman, that I have been thus fated—

*The Hebrew form of Leah.

But he shall find that his designs are by a woman mated.
I will not rest by day or night, until is quenched my wrath—
Revenged my wrongs and he cut short on his ambitious path.
From doom of ignominious death I fled in this disguise—
My mother would not in this garb her daughter recognize.
I will seek service with the king, whatever it may be,
And patiently await the time for opportunity,
To throw this upstart from his height; from power, station, wealth—
And what I can not publicly, I will achieve by stealth.
Here, on my knees, and by high heaven, by all I value dear,
If I am spared to live, I will to this, my vow, adhere. (*pulls vail from her bosom.*)
This vail, by which my life was doomed, I'll keep it safe and sure,
Until to dire destruction I the villainous knave shall lure;
Until I hiss into his ears exulting vengeance, cry:
"This gift which thou destined for me—take now thyself—and die!"

(*Kisses vail, hides it again and rises.*)

And now to work! with wile and craft, relentless and untired.
There is no wrath like woman's wrath when fairly once 'tis fired.

[*Exit l. h.*

Carboni (*Enters r. h. Bugle sounds.*)—
Once more I must make proclamation! Of all fair maidens of the land,
To Esther, the most glorious starlight, the king has given heart and hand.
(*Bugle sounds*) Long live Queen Esther! (*Bugle sounds.*)

Chorus (*From audience and stage*)—Long live Queen Esther! Long live Queen Esther!

Music, Coronation March, Enter, r. h. Soldiers.
Haman, bearing queen's purple cloak, and leading in Zeresh.
Mordecai, bearing queen's crown.
Maids of Honor.
Ahasuerus, leading Esther.
Maids of Honor.
Courtiers and court ladies.
Soldiers.

Haman passes royal cloak to first Maid of Honor who places it on Esther.— Mordecai passes crown to second Maid of Honor, who hands it to Ahasuerus; he crowns the Queen.

Music continues till end of coronation. Ahasuerus leads Esther to throne, both seated.

Carboni (*Bugle sounds.*)—Long live Queen Esther! Long live Queen Esther.

Chorus (*From audience and stage.*)—Long live Queen Esther! Long live Queen Esther!

Tableau (red fire.)

END OF FIRST PART.

PART SECOND.

THE DOOM OF THE JEWS.

Vashti (*r. h. disguised as Hatach, the Scribe, carries large volume of scrolls.*)—

For many and many a year were written these chronicles of the State;
Whatever happens worth recording, it certain goes, like fate,
Into these scrolls of royal annals, which I now must preserve;
And from this arduous work and duty I never more shall swerve.
The king has, by his gracious power and with unwonted grace,
Besought by intervening friends, accorded me this place.
'Tis by a strange coincidence, I wonder what it bodes?
My first official act records, the strangest episodes.
I've written in my scrolls, this morning, the most astounding fact:
Two rogues had planned against our monarch a bloody, murderous act;
But they were foiled by Mordecai, the trusty, faithful Jew;
Who, while on guard, as keeper of the palace-portals, knew
Their language, which they ne'er suspected; he overheard their plot;
And through Queen Esther, newly chosen, revealed it on the spot.
The sovereign's life was saved, escaping by a breadth—
The traitors quick were doomed to ignominious death.
They both were hanged this very day, commanded by the crown;
And in this roll of royal annals 'tis faithful written down.

[*Exits l. h.*

Zeresh (*Enter r. h.*)—Who would not have been Haman's bride?
His name and wealth with princes vied!
So proud, ambitious, noble, grand;
The envied prize in all the land,

And yet—and yet, this lesson stern,
Like many others, I must learn;
The house is empty, the hearth is *bare*,
Where both the consorts not equally *share*,
Life's joys and sorrows, bliss and care;
Where one seems only to be fated,
To see the other proud, elated,
By earthly glitter and worldly flare.
They may be married, but are not mated!
And thus have I been Haman's bride—
Would, never I knew, what did betide
A great and rich man's wife to be!
How many maids would willingly,
As most shall tearfully confess,
Their hearts forfeit and happiness.
It is, although it may not seem,
An idle and a silly dream;
A flitting shadow, which once caught,
Turns into most delusive naught,
The empty honors thus desired,
The giddy height from far admired.
When they at last are realized,
So feverish chased and yearning prized—
Pity the woman here and above
Who barters thus and sells her love. [*Exit r. h.*

(*Music.—Soldiers enter l. h.—As Haman comes in, they prostrate themselves all before him.—He motions them away.—Exeunt with martial music l. h.*)

Haman (*r. h.*)—Nearer and nearer I reach the goal of all my wild ambition!
Unbounded makes the king my power; I reign without condition.
The highest rank, the greatest wealth, on me they are bestowed;
My happiness the only thing, bars strong the well-planned road:
This Jew, this haughty Mordecai! Perdition! who is he?
Will not like all the rest, before me bow low and bend his knee.

Mordecai (*Seen r. h. gesticulating; enters quick and boldly.*)—
And do you know why I refuse thy base, idolatrous will?
That I the law of my religion conscientiously fulfill!

I may not bow to mortal man—nor bend before a clod!
The Jew but worships his Creator and kneels but to his God!
[*Exit proudly r. h.*

Haman (*Runs after him in height of passion.*)—Revenge! I'll have revenge! for deep mortification—
No! not on him alone! but on his whole vile nation—
Shall fall my punishment! Straight will I to the king!
And through him on their heads annihilation bring.
[*Exit l. h.*

Ahasuerus (*Saunters in wearily r. h.*)—
Forever worried and foiled;
My time and pleasures are spoiled
With cares of State, small and great;
Documents signing; petitions declining;
For office and place; money to raise;
Oh! it is sad, 'tis cruelly bad,
To wear this ring—and be a king.

Haman (*Rushes in and prostrates himself before the king l. h.*)—
My lord and master! here upon my bended knee,
Thy minister most faithful, thy humble servant see!
Deep in my heart I've been insulted by a Jew;
And who defies thy steward, thy royalty mocks too!
There lives within thy realms this cursed Hebrew race,
Who ne'er obey our laws and who our Gods disgrace.
May therefore so it please thy gracious majesty,
That we destroy these slaves! send forth thy sealed decree!
It profits thee no longer to shield this hateful band.
Ten thousand talents silver I'll weigh into thine hand,
If thou wilt grant this favor for which I plead and pine.

Ahasuerus (*Takes signet-ring from his finger.*)—
Thy treasures keep! and also the Israelites be thine!
Do with them as thou pleasest; this signet-ring of mine,
I place it on thy finger—last token of my might—
I'll keep but crown and scepter—thou execute my right!

Haman (*Receives ring on his finger.*)—
Thanks, thanks, my gracious lord and master! [*Exeunt l. h.*

Music.
Intermezzo for Grand Ballet, Persian Games and Dances.

Carboni (*Followed by people r. h.; bugle sounds.*)—
Know all ye Gentile people, our king has thus decreed;
And make ye preparations to give it fullest heed:
That in the twelfth month "Adar," and on the fourteenth day,
All Jews be killed for certain, without reprieve or stay.
The lot was cast by Haman, the "Pur," as in Chaldee
We name the way in which is found a lucky pedigree.
[*Exeunt r. h.*

Mordecai (*l. h in sack and ashes; seats himself mournfully; then slowly rising comes forward.*)—
Woe is me! woe is me! woe is me, Lord!
Again on my people Thy wrath is poured!
Help us, our Father! (*kneels*) here on my knees—
I pray Thee! protect us from our enemies.
Thou who hast freed us from Egypt's yoke,
Once more, Thee, Savior, Thy people invoke!
Let us not perish by tyrant's decree;
Let not the wicked triumphant be! (*Rises*)
Rise Thou, O Zabaoth! we trust in Thy name;
Our hope and our faith must not come to shame!

Vashti, as Hatach, the Scribe (*enters hastily r. h.*)—
The queen asks instantly to know why thou appear'st in mourning so?
It is her royal kind desire that thou accept her gift; attire
Thyself in costly dress, while I report thy strange distress.

Mordecai.—Come with me, that I may deliver
A message to our gracious queen,
Which chills my blood and makes me shiver;
She too will mourn and feel it keen. [*Exeunt l h.*
(*Slow music, which continues for some time, and during Esther's monologue.*)

Esther (*Enters r. h.*)—Great Heavenly Father! has it come to this!
Men, women, children, perish in one day!
Is it possible that hatred needs such fuel?

That man can be to man so hard and cruel?
Age after age blind barbarism smites
My hapless people, my poor Israelites.—
For sake of their religion, serving God, the Great,
They meet wherever they dwell, the martyr's fate.
Unpitied, homeless, they are prejudiced
By ignorance, by superstition sacrificed,
They in despair repeat the tearful song:
"How long, Oh! Lord, wilt thou abandon us—how long?"
King Ahasuerus has shown me late no grace—
For thirty days I've not beheld his face.
'Tis death, unbidden to come into his presence—
And yet, I can not bear now with quiescence
To stand inactive and desert with cold denial,
My hapless people in this hour of trial.
May I true daughter of my nation prove;
Most worthy of God's trust, His care—and love!
These three days have by my especial request,
The Hebrews fasted; prayed by day and night.
And I have joined in this with all the rest; (*she kneels*)
Oh God! guide Thou my errand right! (*weeps*)
I now will seek the king—though it my life may cost—
My people must be saved—and if I'm lost—I'm lost!

[*Exit l. h.*

(*Enter Ahasuerus and Haman, r. h. Ahasuerus ascends the throne and is seated; crown and scepter lie by his side. Haman stands at foot of throne, l. h.*)

Haman.—This is the greatest labor which ever I have done;
These Jews, they all must perish, escape there shall not one.
They are a lot of hucksters, who wealthy grow by trade;
While our poor people groan and pant in using plow and spade.
Sly, crafty, sharp and stingy, a state within a state,
They own no Gods but their own God, whose coming they await.

Ahasuerus.—But does it not look cruel that for no other crime
The young and old shall perish, and all at the same time?
For sake of their religion; to which they strict adhere—
And for their mode of living, in which no wrongs appear.

Is not this empire large enough to let each man and nation
Choose for themselves the labor of their own best inclination?
To buy and sell and to grow rich, seems to be no great sin—
And does it hurt the government, how men their living win?
At least these were the lessons, which my pious teachers gave—
Great statesmen at my time of youth, though long now in the grave.

Haman.—Blind theorists! who argued well from papyrus and scrolls;
But these things are shaped different, where practice firm controls.
It is by long experience that we now better know—
Their stiff-necked disposition makes, that I do hate them so!
I can not here enumerate, the wherefore and the why.
Our edict has gone forth, my sire, and all will have to die.
But lo! whom do I see approach? who comes unbidden yonder?
Behold! at risk of life the queen appears; (*aside*) what for I wonder?

[*Enter Esther r. h.*

Ahasuerus (*Rises from throne.*)—
What is thy wish? what thy desire? I hereby covenant,
And were it half my kingdom, queen, all willing I would grant,
My lovely Esther—welcome queen! come forth and do not fear;
This golden scepter I reach out, come, touch it and draw near.

Esther (*Touches and kisses the scepter.*)—
If thou wilt condescend my liege, may it thy pleasure be,
To come with Haman on the morrow, unto a feast with me;
Which I have caused to be prepared; 'tis what I now require,
And then I will inform the king of all my heart's desire.

Ahasuerus (*Holds out the scepter again.*)—
Thy modest wish is granted, we surely will appear.

Esther (*Touches and kisses the scepter again.*)—
May I my Lord for this great boon most humbly thank thee here.
(*Red fire—Tableau representing Dore's illustration of Esther before Ahasuerus.*)

END OF SECOND PART.

PART THIRD.

PRIDE COMES TO GRIEF.

Ahasuerus (*enters r. h, walks to and fro.*)—
I could not sleep last night! dreams of sad premonition
Passed through my restless brain; some strangely wrong condition,
Which agitate my realm—some terrible mistake,
Made me toss on my couch and kept me wide awake.
How shall I pass the time? relieve me of my care?
What ho! without! is none yet in attendance there?

Vashti, as Hatach, the Scribe (*r. h. bows reverently.*)—
My king commands! what is thy will.
Which I may instantly fulfill?

Ahasuerus —Hatach, my faithful scribe! time passes very slow!
I wish you'd read me something I do not know!

Vashti, as Hatach, the Scribe.—I have my scroll near by, with pleasure I will read.
To get my books, I'll fly, be back anon, indeed. (*aside.*)
My chance I apprehend! I can foresee it all—
Beginning of the end, to bring my foe to fall!

[*Exit l. h.*

Ahasuerus.—Strange how his features kind, of some one else remind—
I wonder on what odd story, if merry or if bright—
He will in his old parchments, by accident alight.

Vashti, as Hatach, the Scribe (*Returns with scroll opened and reads.*)—
Thus has it happened on a certain day:
Two servants schemed our dear king to slay.
Then Mordecai, gate-keeper—he a Jew—

Appeared at court—revealing what he knew.
It was investigated and proved true.
The sovereign's life was saved, escaping by a breadth—
The traitors quick were doomed to ignominious death.

Ahasuerus.—I well remember it—soon after, when Esther was crowned queen.

But tell me, what reward and honor to Mordecai has been?

Vashti, as Hatach, the Scribe.—None, my sire! no present—distinction or reward
Was e'er extended him—not even our regard—

Ahasuerus.—Some one approaches! come we'll to the anteroom—
Perhaps a change of air may quick disperse my gloom.

[*Exeunt l. h.*

(*Enter Haman and Zeresh, r. h.*)

Zeresh.—Now have I seen with my own eyes how Mordecai thee bold defies!

Haman.—I wield the highest power; the greatest wealth I own.
My name is feared and reverenced from beggar to the throne.
The satraps and the princes before me kneel at sight,
E'en Esther for her banquets this Haman must invite.

Zeresh.—How often have I wished it different; have sighed for a more modest fate?
When we could have enjoyed in quiet some happiness at any rate.
Some peasant's life, far in the mountains, with rural plenty and content.
Surrounded by our friends and children; the best domestic blandishment:
I, simple housewife and as merry as is at morn the singing lark;
Thou! king upon thine own possessions, revered and loved, a patriarch.
But now no end to everlasting turmoils of court and politics—
Oh! how I hate these schemes and cabals, the direful, lying, boasting tricks;
Uninterrupted care and trouble; anxiety and grief and sorrow;
High up this day, high as we may—and down again, low down to-morrow.

Haman.—All honor and glory which I possess turn into air and nothingness,
As long as I view daily so, this Mordecai, my haughty foe!

Zeresh.—But why not punish him so sore, that he can trouble thee no more?

Haman.—What can I do? at any price, I will get rid of him! Advise.

Zeresh.—There stands a gallows in the court, 'tis fifty cubits high—
Go, get thee to the king at once! for his permit apply,
That Mordecai, thine enemy, thou mayest hang thereon;
Success be thine! without delay, let it be surely done.

[*Exit r. h.*

Haman.—Straight will I to the king, to grant me this last boon,
I'm not content, until I kill that vile poltroon.
Before we go to Esther to this day's royal feast—
I warrant it my troubles the hangman shall have eased.

(*Ahasuerus, with Vashti as Hatach, the Scribe, enters l. h.*)

Ahasuerus.—Ah, Haman here? well met just now! come make me quick reply:
What wouldst thou do unto the man, the king especially
Desires to honor?

Haman (*aside*)—For whom but 'gain for me, can this distinction be? (*aloud.*)
Know then, my sire: I would have brought the purple and the crown,
Which thou, O King, thyself hast worn, when riding through the town;
The self-same charger too, who bore thee, on that auspicious day,
When thou the throne ascended first, when all was bright and gay.
A person of high rank should lead him through every lane and street;
And at each corner loud proclaim, where'er our people meet:
"Thus is done to the man to whom our gracious king would show
Distinguished honor!"

Ahasuerus.—Then Haman quick do so
To Mordecai, the Jew!

Haman (*aside*) Perdition! is this true?

Ahasuerus.—And on thy life! no single thing, as thou to me hast stated,
Leave now undone this very hour!

Haman (*aside*).—I? to that man so hated!
(*aloud*) Forthwith I shall obey the king's behest.

[*Exeunt both r. h.*

(*Vashti remains gesticulating, Haman comes running back.*)

Haman—Hatach, my friend, what's best?
Thou knowest what has happened, tell me what can be done?

Vashti, (*as Hatach, the Scribe*).—Obey! though it does humiliate —evasion there is none!
For to refuse but with a breath, is instantaneous death!

(*Haman slinks off, wringing his hands.*)

Haman.—Alas! how are the mighty fallen! I see it coming fast—
Disgrace or death—it is the choice for humbled pride at last!

[*Exit.*

Vashti, (*as Hatach, the Scribe*).—

Ha-ha-ha! behold the tyrant proud!
Thus would I have him crushed and cowed:
So I have suffered at his will:
Nor am I done with him—still, still
He will learn things to hurt him sore
Before this drama-play is o'er. [*Exit l. h.*

Enter Carboni, bugle sounds before entering and repeated: Soldiers, Haman, and sons.—Mordecai seated on horse, which is led by Vashti as Scribe.—(Mordecai in royal purple and golden crown).—Men and women following.—When in center of stage and grouped—Haman with oriental obeisances, exclaims:

Haman.—Thus must be done unto the man our king delights to honor.

(*Repeated bugle sounds. Tableau. Red fire.*)

END OF THIRD PART.

PART FOURTH.

THE INSTITUTING OF PURIM.

Zeresh (*Enters r. h. singing.*)—

The poorest thing on earth will cling
To life! should I despair?
My heart it rings, its quivering strings,
By pain and grief and care;
My soul with trembling fears;
It fills mine eyes with tears.
When roaming wild, I was a child
How oft by day and night,
Like heavenly gleams, I dreamt such dreams—
Dreams sweet and glorious bright.
But all like bubbles blown,
Forever more are flown.

If ever I sorely pitied, I pity my husband now:—
He, Haman, came back crestfallen and with a clouded brow.
Relying so triumphant, to follow my advice—
Which would end all his fretting—it would have been so nice—
To use that splendid gallows and hang his foe thereon—
And had not strange things happened, ere night it had been done.
But woe to all who reckon on favors of the great!
They'll meet, when least expected, misfortune soon or late.
Thus by a freak most staggering, the proud is vile debased;
The humble and the lowly to high renown are raised.

(*Sings:*)

O wish in vain, to be again
A trusting, hopeful child!

A child once more, as heretofore,
Who roamed and dreamed so wild.
To once again, supreme
Have girlhood's golden dream.

(*After short pause.*)

There is an Eastern legend, which always has proved true:
The hand is ever palsied that's raised against a Jew.
The Hebrew ne'er—his enemy, must fall and will go under.
So history reveals his God with mighty arm and wonder.
If Mordecai, as I am told, is of the Israelites—
I tremble for my family, the last Amalekites.
Their Moses cursed already, when he made his people free.
My tribe, who in the wildernes fell on them treacherously.
What will become of me and mine? I see it happen all—
Already has commenced my house—alas—to shake and fall—
Aye! Haman in his haughtiness, would rather break, than bend!
Gods of my fathers! protect us! how shall our troubles end?

(*Sings:*)

The poorest thing on earth will cling
To life! should I despair?
Nay, Hope doth bring, though quivering
A balm for grief and care.
Faith stills the trembling fears;
And love dries all our tears.

[*Exit singing l. h.*

(*Triumphal music; enters from r. h. soldiers, Carboni, Maids of Honor, Haman. Ahasuerus, leading Esther.—Vashti, as Hatach, with scroll covered by vail. Maids of Honor.—Soldiers, courtiers and court ladies.—When formed in position of semi-circle on both sides of the throne, music ceases:*)

Ahasuerus (*On throne, rises, speaks to Esther.*)—
My lovely queen! my Esther! now for the second day,
We to thy kindly bidding for banqueting, obey.
We have thy great munificence untroubled and uncloyed,
In dignity and pleasure, most royally enjoyed.
Now tell me thy petition and do no longer waver;
And were it half my kingdom I'll grant thee any favor!

Esther (*Prostrate before the king.*)—
If grace I've found in thine eyes, my king, and so it pleases thee—
Then I petition and entreat—my life be given me!
And let my people, I request—the Hebrews let be spared.
For we are doomed to be destroyed—I would not so have cared,
Had we been only to bondage sold—but since all must be slain,
In spite of harm unto my liege—O let me not plead in vain!

Ahasuerus (*Raises and kisses the queen.*)—
Who dares such villainous thing to do? who is at heart so bold?

Esther (*With great emphasis.*)—Then know our deadly enemy! this Haman here behold!

Haman (*Kneels and grasps the queen's robe.*)—Mercy—oh have mercy, my most gracious queen!

Esther (*Draws away from him.*)—Hast thou not to my people bloodthirsty tyrant been?

Ahasuerus.—Dare his vile touch defile yet our royal dignity? Away unto his doom with him!

Vashti, as Hatach, the Scribe, (*Takes cover from scroll, disclosing the vail—wrenches signet ring from Haman's finger and holds up vail ostentatiously.*)—
Let him first covered be
With this the solemn emblem of treachery and crime—
As is our priestly custom, most solemn and sublime. (*aside to Haman.*)
Dost thou not recognize this vail? I swore my vengeance should not fail!

Haman.—Merciful heaven! who art thou; demon—apparition or ghost?

Vashti, as Hatach, the Scribe, (*Aside to Haman.*)—Vashti's avenger! who now proclaims: Haman, the wicked, lost!

Carboni.—Make an example this day, O King, of treason most malign.
Does not a gallows stand prepared on which he did design
To hang this very evening—aye, Mordecai thereon?

Ahasuerus (*With great emphasis.*)—He be thus doomed himself forthwith! at once it shall be done!

(*Halberdiers lead Haman away, after being covered by Hatach with the vail Slow music; blue fire.*)

Esther.—And now my gracious king if thou wouldst save my people yet—
Thou wilt send quick thy edict forth—for we must not forget,
They are in peril of their lives—in all thy wide domain—
If such is not done instantly, thy help will come in vain.

Ahasuerus—But whom can I commission for such important trust?
Come, Esther, help me, give advice—good wife, thou wilt and must!

Esther.—If I then may suggest a man, most faithful and most true—
My relative and guardian, send, send Mordecai, the Jew!

Ahasuerus (*Greatly astonished.*)—Is he thy kindred? thou his ward? and I did never know!
Let Mordecai be brought forthwith! thank fortune it is so!

(*Carboni sounds bugle; Mordecai led in by Halberdiers. Slow music.*)

Mordecai (*Bowing low to king and queen.*)—
Long life and heaven's blessing attend ye royal pair!
Who will in Asia's history of greatest glory share.
My life is at your service! already I'm deputed:
To say king thy command is just—thy sentence executed!

Chorus (*All the children of the Sabbath-school or members of the L. A., seated among the audience, and the people are requested to join in singing the old melody.*)

Va yitlu es Homon al hoeiz
Asher hichin l' Mordechai
V' chamas hamelech sh' cho choh.
(And Haman they hanged on the gallows so high
Which he had intended for Mordecai,
And the wrath of the king was abated.)

Ahasuerus (*Descends from the throne; takes signet ring from Hatach and places it on Mordecai's finger*)

Thus be endowed with Haman's rank and with his wealth and power.
Upon thee and thy nation I their right and freedom shower.

(*Advances to front of stage.*)

I own there is a providence, which leads both king and nation;
And while we work in dark and gloom, we are here on probation.
A higher power steers our course, to reach the goal above!
All men are equal at His feet in hope and faith and love.
The time for narrow-mindedness and prejudice will cease—
When Jew and Gentile dwell content together and in peace.

(*Returns to throne and is seated.*)

Vashti as Hatach, the Scribe (*To king and queen.*)—

I'll write this in my annals of Esther's reign and thine!
We'll call it the "M'gillah;" forever it shall shine
To rulers and to princes a plea for toleranᶜe!

(*Advances to front of stage*)

And to the house of Israel a great inheritance!
And unto me (*muses and sighs*) I own it, the time for woman's right,
Among these barbarous Asians, it is not yet in sight.
But I have learned it lately, that 'mongst some Northern nation—
In a far distant country has a new civilization
Arisen in its mighty power, and women there elated,
Already to their hearts' content the men have well berated.
I hear they there are doctors, and learned in law and lore.
One does command a ship, and some preach where they God adore.
The men tend quite submissively to duties of the houses:
They mind the babes, they cook and wash as well as their good spouses.
The government will shortly too by woman's rule grow free!
They will fill all the offices! That is the land for me!
The cause of Vashti lives triumphant, when I shall be no more,
Farewell, home of my birth! I'll go to that far distant shore,
And though my fate to history be lost fore'er and aye—
Our sex will build me monuments! I'm off, my friends! good-bye!

(*Stands back as Esther descends from throne and advances, led forth by Mordecai.*)

Esther. — Ye children of my race and nation—no, never lose your faith and hope;
There even is for modest woman among all people work and scope.
Our enemies will never conquer, our victories come firm and sure,
As long as Israel's fair daughters shall true remain, both good and pure.
As long as we shall trust in Heaven and let our courage never fail—
Though we may often feel disheartened and oft in mind and spirit quail.
Let Esther stand for an example! let be your temper loving, mild;
Live, proud and firm to your religion, each one a kind obedient child;
And when you celebrate the "Purim" let this its final purport be—
Own: God our Father rules forever our pangs and tears, our joy and glee.

(*Ahasuerus has during her speech descended from throne: leads Esther back; both are seated, while Mordecai advances.*)

Mordecai (*Like one entranced.*)—
Upon me the spirit of prophecy,
In this solemn moment comes over me,
And through the vista of long time—
I see in far off, unknown clime:

(*From here the monologue should be so localized as to point out strongly the salient features of the place where performed; the following was for Vicksburg, Miss.*)

A mighty river gulfward flow,
And by its brink a city grow.
"The City of the Hills!" 'tis named,
It will historical be famed.
There throng unto "Magnolia Hall"
The old and young, my people all.
And there in loving memory,
To Esther, A'suerus and me,
To wicked Haman and his clan,
They celebrate with great elan
Their feast of "Purim" in fine state,
Exalting God, the good and great.

Henceforth forever will in glory
All Israelites the Purim-story
Unto their children's children tell,
And though it may grow old and hoary,
It will be ever young and green—
And will be rhymed once passing well
And modest, as has lately been.
And thus forever shall go on
In verse and song, what we have done.
Till Jew and Gentile will shake hand
In every zone and every land;
When prejudice and hate of yore
Become unknown and be no more.
(Stops short and asks quizzically)—
Now how is this for prophecy
From your old patron Mordecai?
(Steps back while First Maid of Honor advances:)

First Maid of Honor *(Comes forward.)*—
May I appeal to your "Rach-mones?"
Your charity?—our national pride!
Accept our efforts for "Shlach mones,"
The old-time custom far and wide
To send out gifts of gratitude
Do not to our mistakes allude—
We did as well as we knew how.
And making my politest bow
If but for sake of sheer "Rach Mones" *(claps her hands.)*
Applaud our efforts! that's our "Shlach mones!"
(Stands back in line.)

Second Maid of Honor *(Comes forward.)*—

GERMAN SPEECH.

Ihr, die Ihr hier verſammelt ſeid als Zeugen,
Wie von uralten Zeiten bis auf heute,
Vor Gott, dem Lenker, ſich die Menſchen beugen,
Wie Er regieret weislich Leid und Freude;
Erkennet es: In Seinem höchſten Walten—

Perſonen nicht, noch Völker dürfen frevelnd ſchalten!
So zeigt uns Israel in ſeiner Weltgeſchichte,
Im höchſten, klarſten, hellen Tageslichte.
Wie einſt in Shuſan muß es ſich noch jetzt erfüllen!
Das iſt's, was wir von dieſer Bühne lehren wollten.
Nehmt für die jugendliche That den beſten Willen,
Wenn wir nicht Alle ſchön gehandelt haben ſollten.
Seid doch zufrieden und lobet uns heut;
Gut Purim, gut Purim! Ihr lieben Leut'!

ENGLISH VERSION.

Ye, all assembled here this night
Bear witness: God from yore, unto this hour
Has ruled humanity in His great might—
And joys and sorrows in His sovereign pow'r
Dispenses. Know that neither nations may,
Nor individuals defy his sway.
Nor rage nor anger dare oppose His will!
So proves our history, is our experience still!
The story which in Shusan once took place,
Has in all ages upheld our suffering race.
Such is the lesson we did from this stage relate.
If we did not our parts well personate,
Forgive our faults! Say you are satisfied,
With our well-meant intentions. Thus decide,
Applauding us by giving each a call
To bow our thanks! Good Purim to you all.

(Stands back in line: Carboni comes to front, sounds bugle, as signal for chorus from audience and stage to sing:)

Va yitlu es Homon al hoeiz
Asher hichin l' Mordechai
V'chamas hamelech sh'ch-choh.

(And Haman they hanged on the gallows so high
Which he had intended for Mordecai,
And the wrath of the king was abated)

(Grand tableau: red fire; during which the curtain falls.)

[THE END.]

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